

## **CT DPH Drinking Water Section**

### **BOIL WATER ADVISORIES FOR PWS OWNERS/OPERATORS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

#### **What is a Boil Water Advisory? Is it the same as a Boil Water Notice?**

A Boil Water Advisory (BWA) is a public statement advising customers to boil tap water before consuming it. Advisories are issued when an event has occurred allowing the possibility for the water distribution system to become contaminated. An advisory does not mean that the water is contaminated, but rather that it could be contaminated; because the water quality is unknown, customers should assume the water is unsafe to drink and take the appropriate precautions. An advisory is different from a Boil Water Notice, which is issued when contamination is confirmed in the water system. During a notice, all customers must boil their water before consuming it or use bottled water.

#### **When should A Boil Water Advisory be issued?**

A "Boil Water Advisory" should be issued when an event has occurred which could have possibly contaminated the drinking water. The following are some situations where a boil water advisory may be warranted:

- Loss of pretreatment at a surface water treatment plant (i.e., no floc) and the untreated water reaches the distribution system. The finished water turbidities in this case may, or may not, be greater than 5 NTU. In this situation, it is likely that microbial contamination has reached the distribution system; however, it will be at least 24 hours before contamination can be confirmed through testing. Therefore, an advisory should be issued immediately.
- Loss of pressure in the entire distribution system or a significant portion of a distribution system.
- A line break where dirt and debris have entered the distribution piping.
- If untreated water reaches the distribution system due to submergence of storage tanks, treatment facilities or sources of supply in flood waters.
- The use of emergency groundwater sources that have not been sampled or flushed on a regular basis.

Please note that the above situations are not the only times that a boil water advisory should be issued. The Drinking Water Section can assist anyone in making a decision to issue a boil water notice/advisory, as well as assist in determining what actions should be taken to correct the problem and when to repeal the alert.

#### **Distribution of the Boil Water Advisory**

There are several means by which the notice or advisory may be distributed. If the water system or affected area of a water system is relatively small, a written notice/advisory may be hand delivered to the door of each residence. In addition to the door to door delivery a copy of the notice/advisory should be posted in places normally frequented by the residents, such as post offices, convenience stores, gas stations, etc. The notice/advisory must never be placed in mail boxes because many of the residents may have already checked their mailbox for the day and thus may not receive the alert until the next day. Also, placing non-mailed items in a mailbox is a federal offense. If the affected area is large, the notice/advisory should be made by electronic media such as local radio and television stations. In severe cases, such as waterborne disease outbreaks, the local Emergency Preparedness Division should be contacted to aid in getting the message to consumers through the emergency broadcast system. Public water systems should also be prepared to provide advisories for non-english speaking consumers.

**Communication with the Department**

Prior to issuing any advisory to consumers, contact the Drinking Water Section (DWS) at 860-509-7333 during business hours (8:00AM – 4:30PM) or 860-509-8000 after hours. A copy of the notice/advisory be forwarded to DWS as soon as possible after is issued.

**How long must a Boil Water Advisory be in effect?**

An advisory will remain in effect until test samples show the water is safe to drink. Five bacteriological samples collected from the affected portions of the distribution system is preferred. Testing for bacteria requires 18-24 hours to complete, depending on the type of test used. The samples are incubated to actually grow bacteria, if any are present. As a result, advisories will be in effect for at least 18-24 hours.

**Why consider issuing a Boil Water Advisory in preparation for a hurricane?**

Because a hurricane may cause damage to the water system that may make the water unsafe to drink, and because the hurricane may disrupt methods of public notification after a storm, the advisory can be issued before the hurricane strikes. Public water systems will dispatch crews to begin surveying damage and making repairs immediately after the storm. If sample test results show that the water has been contaminated by bacteria, the PWS will issue a Boil Water Notice; if tests show the water is safe to drink, the PWS will lift the advisory.

**Additional Information:**

See the following page for a customizable Boil Water Advisory Notice and the links below for additional information regarding Drinking Water Advisories

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/pdf/emergency/drinking-water-advisory-communication-toolbox.pdf>
2. [http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/health\\_professionals/bwa/public.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/health_professionals/bwa/public.html)
3. <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/watersecurity/emergencyinfo/pre-hurricane.cfm>
4. <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/watersecurity/emergencyinfo/post-hurricane.cfm>

## BOIL WATER ADVISORY

### Notice to Customers of \_\_\_\_\_

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable.

Tradúzcalo o hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.

# BOIL YOUR TAP WATER

**Failure to follow this advisory could result in stomach or intestinal illness.**

The \_\_\_\_\_ Water System is advising residents to use boiled tap water or bottled water for drinking and cooking purposes as a safety precaution. This precaution is necessary because \_\_\_\_\_

## DO NOT DRINK TAP WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST

Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, beverage and food preparation, and making ice **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water. Boiling is the preferred method to assure that the tap water is safe to drink. Bring all tap water to a rolling boil, **let it boil for one (1) minute**, and let it cool before using, or use bottled water.

If you cannot boil your tap water....

- An alternative method of purification for residents that do not have gas or electricity available is to use liquid household bleach to disinfect water. The bleach product should be recently purchased, free of additives and scents, and should contain a hypochlorite solution of at least 5.25%. Public health officials recommend adding 8 drops of bleach (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon) to each gallon of water. The water should be stirred and allowed to stand for at least 30 minutes before use.
- Water purification tablets may also be used by following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Potable water is available at the following locations: \_\_\_\_\_

We will inform you when you no longer need to boil your water. To address this problem we are \_\_\_\_\_. We anticipate resolving the problem within \_\_\_\_\_.

For more information call:

PWS contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address Phone

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_